



**State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services**

**Scott Walker, Governor
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WATCH FOR BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BEFORE JUMPING IN THE WATER THIS SUMMER

MADISON - State health officials are reminding families and pet owners to watch for blue-green algae in swimming and wading spots this summer.

“It’s great to have fun in Wisconsin waters, but swimming in or swallowing water with high levels of blue-green algae can make you sick,” said Dr. Henry Anderson, State Health Officer. “People and pets should avoid swimming in a body of water with a lot of blue-green algae.”

Blue-green algae may bloom in lakes, rivers and ponds and some blue-green algae produce toxins. Exposure to these algae can cause illness in people and has caused death in both domestic animals and livestock. Individuals can protect themselves, their family, and their pets by avoiding contact with water containing visible amounts of blue-green algae.

Algal blooms can form a thick, foul-smelling scum on the water’s surface that can look like paint or pea soup. Algal blooms range in color from green and fluorescent blue to brown. Most adults will avoid entering water with an algae bloom, but kids and pets can be hard to keep out of the water – no matter how it looks or smells.

Many water-loving dogs will swim and drink from water regardless of smell or appearance. It is important to remember that dogs exposed to algae should be rinsed off following contact with waters experiencing a bloom. Dogs often lick their fur after swimming and rinsing pets helps decrease the chance of ingesting algal materials. Seek immediate veterinary care if your pet develops any signs of illness after swimming in a lake, river or pond.

If you come in contact with a blue-green algae bloom, you may experience eye, throat, nose or skin irritation and gastrointestinal problems, such as vomiting or diarrhea. Symptoms typically appear a few hours after exposure, but occasionally people feel ill several days after exposure. Contact a physician if you experience muscle cramps, respiratory difficulties, nausea or vomiting following swimming in a lake or river.

“It’s a good idea to wash with clean water after playing or swimming in any lake or river, and, as always, to wash hands before eating,” Anderson said.

To report an algae-related illness, or for additional information, call the Department of Health Services at (608) 266-1120 or visit:
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/ch/bluegreenalgae>.

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